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INFO RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 9514
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ NOV 9037
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 5601
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 0796
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 6231
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 4156
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 007981

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S NOVEMBER 1 MEETING WITH BOGOTA MAYOR
GARZON

Classified By: Ambassador William R. Brownfield
Reasons: 1.4(b) and (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) Bogota Mayor Luis Eduardo "Lucho" Garzon told the Ambassador on November 1 that he supports the Free Trade Agreement--with modifications--as well as President Uribe's democratic security policy. Garzon urged the USG to pay greater attention to "leftist" movements in the region but disavowed any alliance with Venezuelan President Chavez. At the Ambassador's request, he agreed to stress to incoming Polo Mayor Samuel Moreno the need to work with the Embassy on security issues. END SUMMARY.

NO FAN OF CHAVEZ

12. (C) The Ambassador paid a courtesy call on Bogota Mayor "Lucho" Garzon on November 1. Garzon said the USG should pay more attention to "leftist" movements in Latin America as well as the long-term impact of Venezuela's role. The Ambassador said the U.S. will work with any pragmatic and democratic government regardless of ideology. Garzon stressed his moderate status in the decidedly left of center Alternative Democratic Pole (PDA) party and is not a Hugo Chavez fan. He has never met with Chavez, even turning down meeting requests when he came to Bogota, and believes Uribe's acceptance of Chavez' facilitation role in humanitarian talks with the FARC is an "error."

FARC APPRAISAL

13. (C) Garzon said he and Bogota Mayor-elect Samuel Moreno both support a humanitarian accord with the FARC. He plans to release a book in December outlining his views on the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the PDA, as well as his reflections on his term. He said that the FARC want recognition as legitimate political players, not terrorists, but do not want to change their policies to achieve this goal. Asked about the role of external players in negotiations, the Ambassador said we accept the efforts of

any party that acts in good faith to promote an accord. Still, the focus must remain on the FARC's actions and their responsibilities for the kidnappings.

14. (C) Garzon commented that the FARC leadership lacks political initiative or vision and simply want to survive Uribe's presidency. The killing of the eleven kidnapped Valle de Cauca legislators in June exemplified their desperation and accelerated the FARC's decline. The escape of Colombian police officer Jhon Frank Pinchao in May, and the recent death of FARC leader Martin Caballero, further fueled the FARC's paranoia. The three American hostages and Ingrid Betancourt remain their most coveted assets for negotiation.

SUPPORT FOR FTA

15. (C) Garzon said Moreno, also a PDA member, who won the Bogota mayor's race with 43% of the vote, would continue his pro-growth measures. Bogota has enjoyed fast economic growth, even higher than the national average (note: 9.65% in the first quarter of this year according to the Bogota Chamber of Commerce). He credited Uribe's democratic security policy with building investor confidence and fostering growth. Garzon supports the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S., but said he would seek modifications to address concerns that the FTA would lead to higher prices for medicine.

SCHOOLS AND SECURITY

16. (C) The Ambassador thanked Garzon for the city's assistance with security for Embassy families and staff and asked him for continued support. Garzon said Embassy security remains an integral part of the overall city security plan. He would underscore the need to address the Embassy's security needs to Moreno, who takes office in January. The Mayor also agreed to convene the school superintendent, Moreno, Embassy officials and appropriate authorities to discuss seismic upgrades and new construction for the Colegio Nueva Granada, where most of the Embassy children attend. Mayor-elect Moreno's children also attend the school. Brownfield